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Angelle et al.

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(54) **EXTENDED RANGE SINGLE-JOINT
ELEVATOR**

294/86.28, 86.3, 90, 116; 188/67;
166/75.14, 77.1, 382, 77.52; 175/423

See application file for complete search history.

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filed on Apr. 30, 2012, now Pat. No. 8,794,684.

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1, 2011.

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E21B 19/07 (2006.01)

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(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC **E21B 19/07** (2013.01); **B23P 19/04**
(2013.01); **Y10T 29/49904** (2015.01)

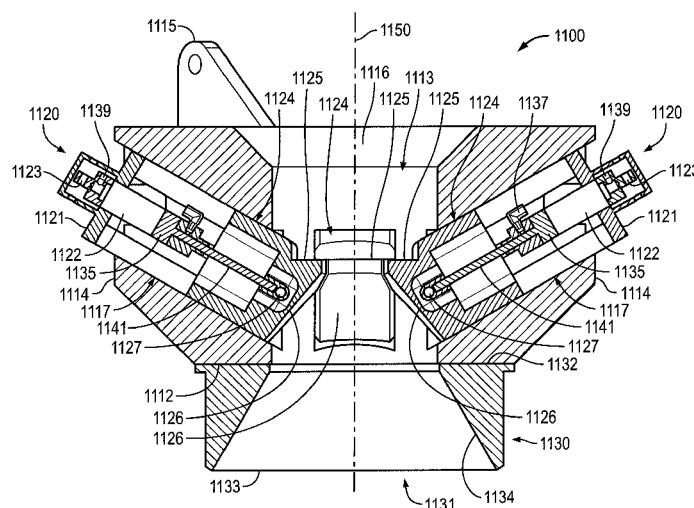
(58) **Field of Classification Search**

USPC 294/102.2, 102.1, 86.19, 86.2, 86.26,

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An elevator to manipulate a tubular segment includes an elevator body with a bore formed therethrough having an axis therein, the elevator body including a plurality of openings extending from an outer surface of the elevator body to the bore of the elevator body, and a base member coupled to a bottom surface of the elevator body, the base member having a guide portion that directs the tubular segment into the bore of the elevator body. The elevator also includes a plurality of slip assemblies disposed inside the plurality of openings and coupled to the elevator body, each of the plurality of slip assemblies including an actuator body coupled to the elevator body, a slip, the slip including an engagement surface disposed orthogonal to the axis of the bore of the elevator body that engages the tubular segment.

20 Claims, 11 Drawing Sheets



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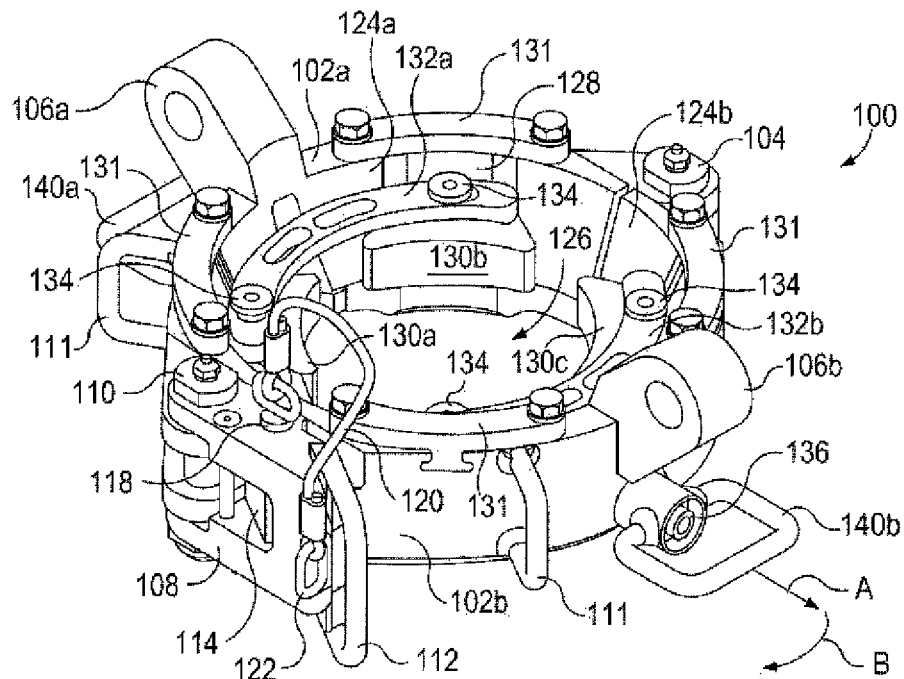


FIG. 1

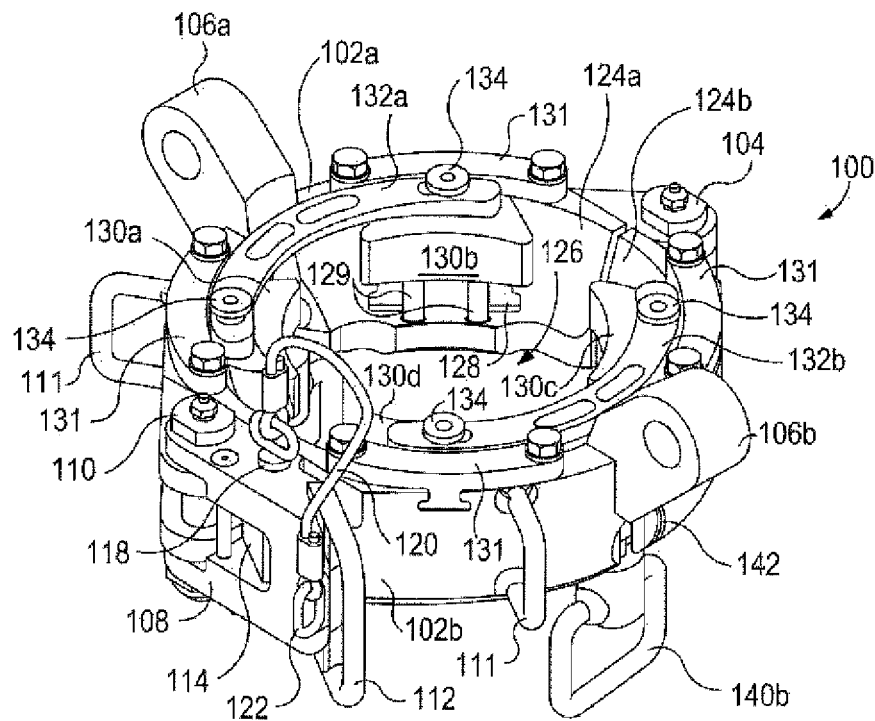


FIG. 2

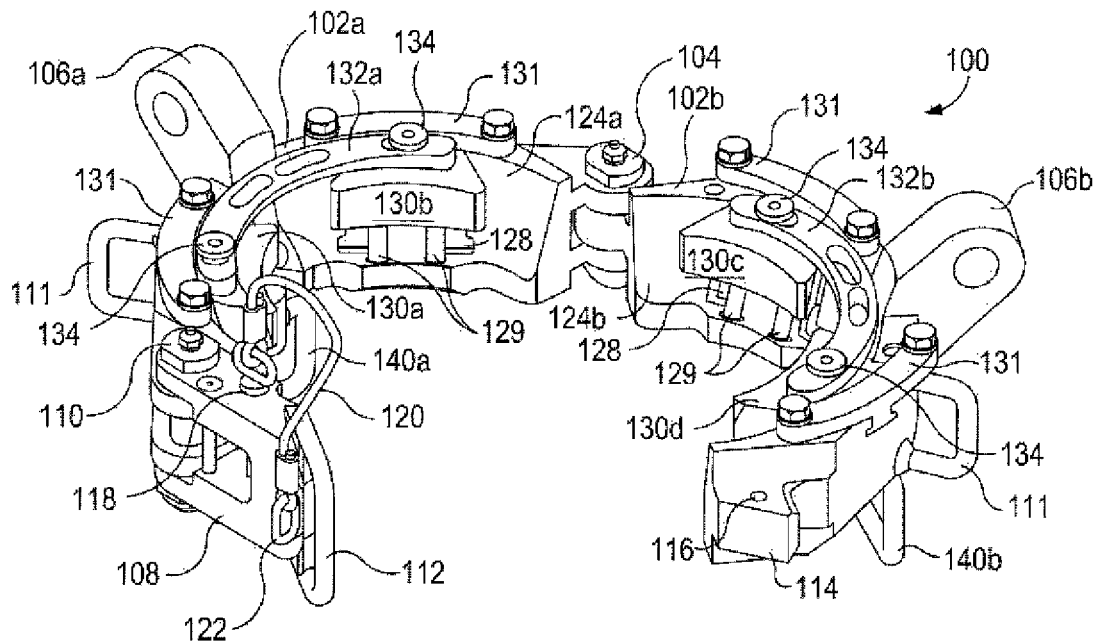


FIG. 3

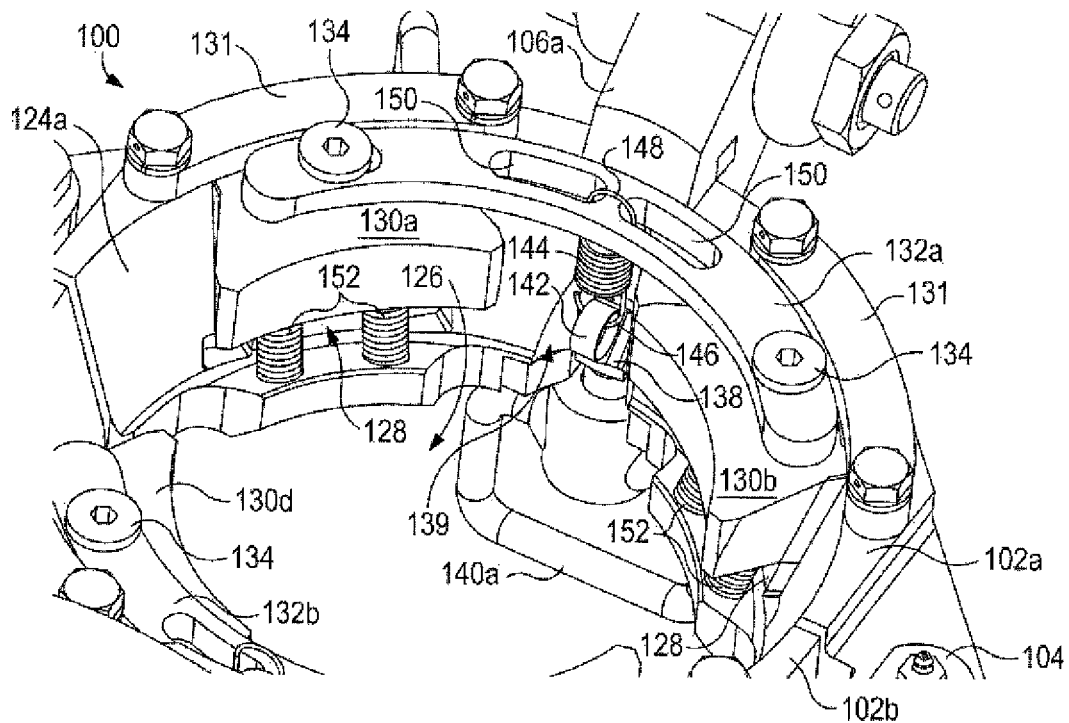


FIG. 4

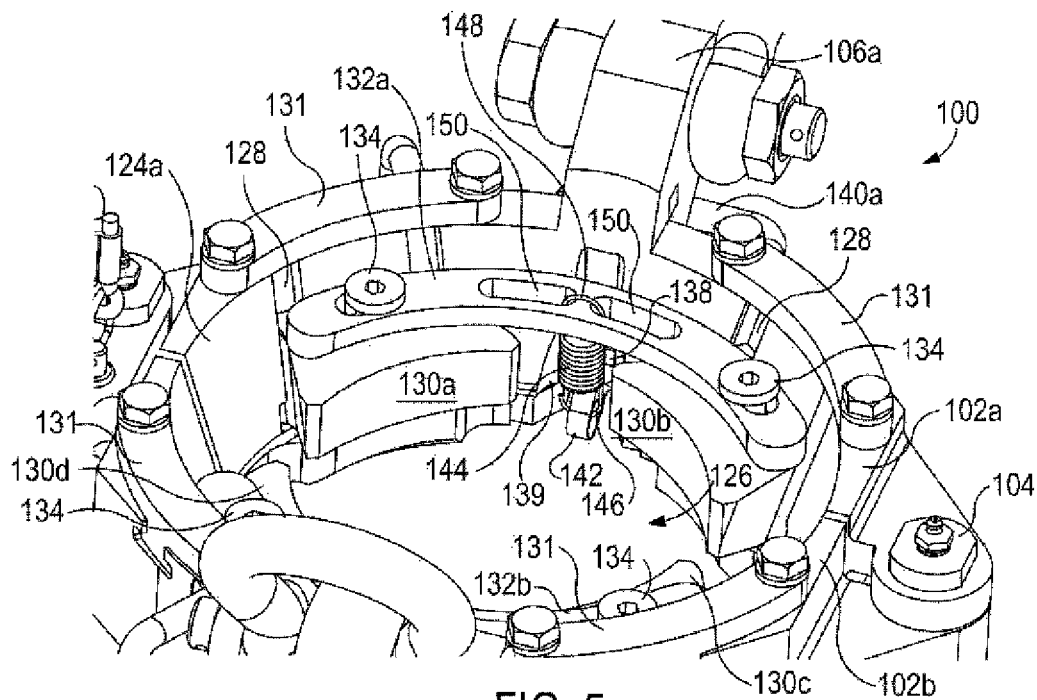


FIG. 5

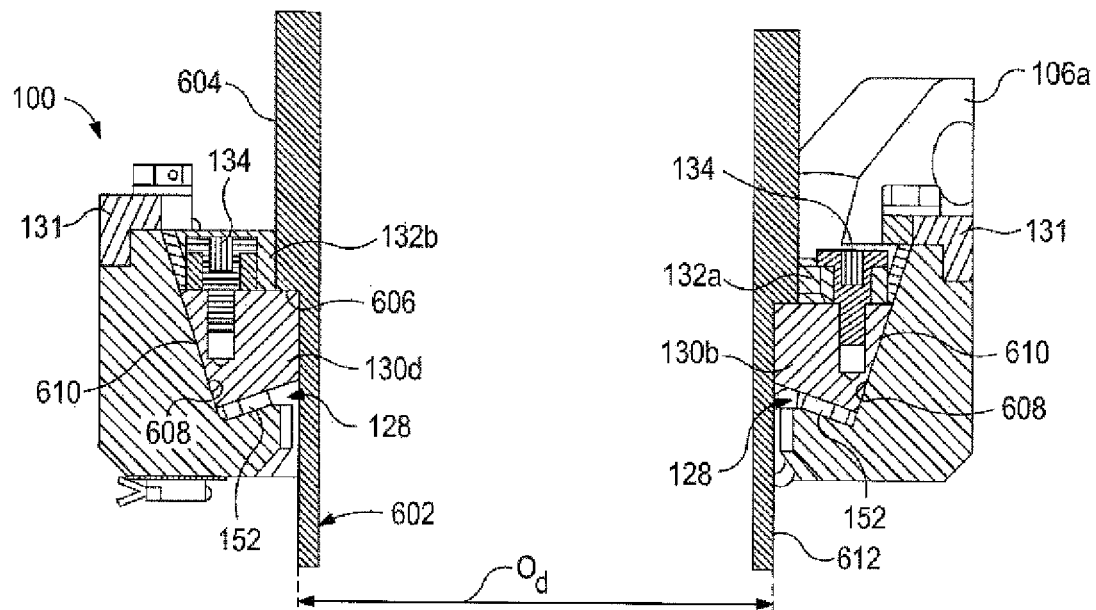


FIG. 6

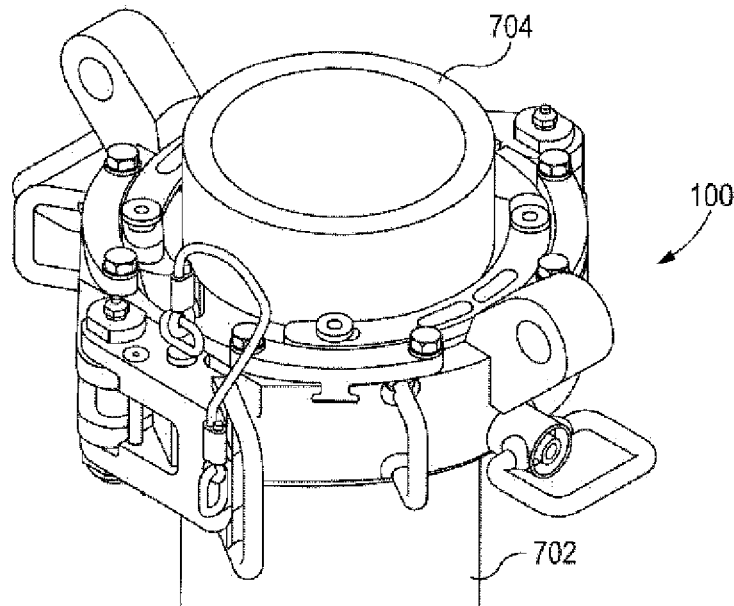


FIG. 7

800

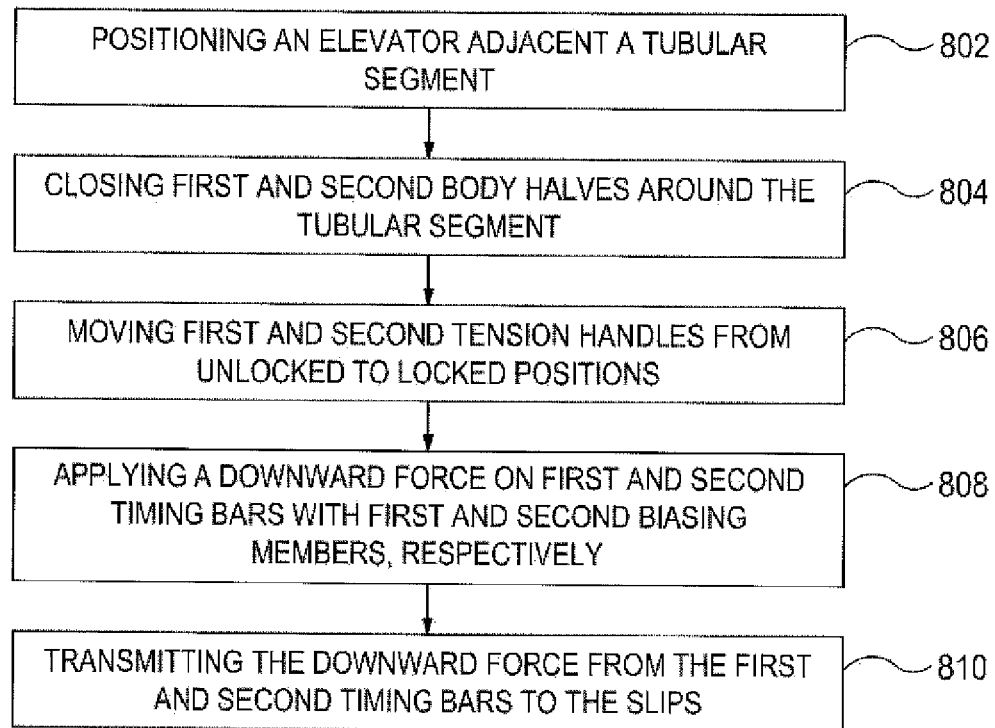


FIG. 8

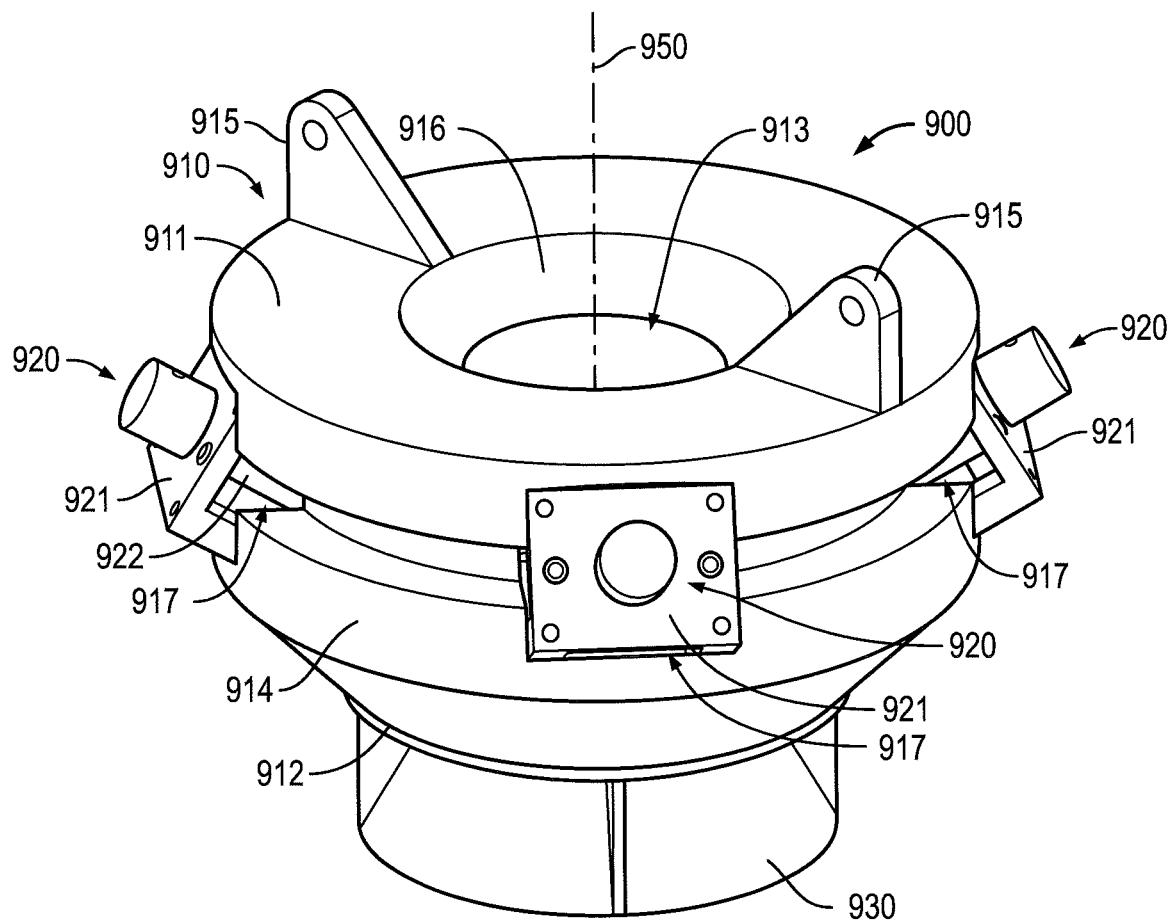


FIG. 9A

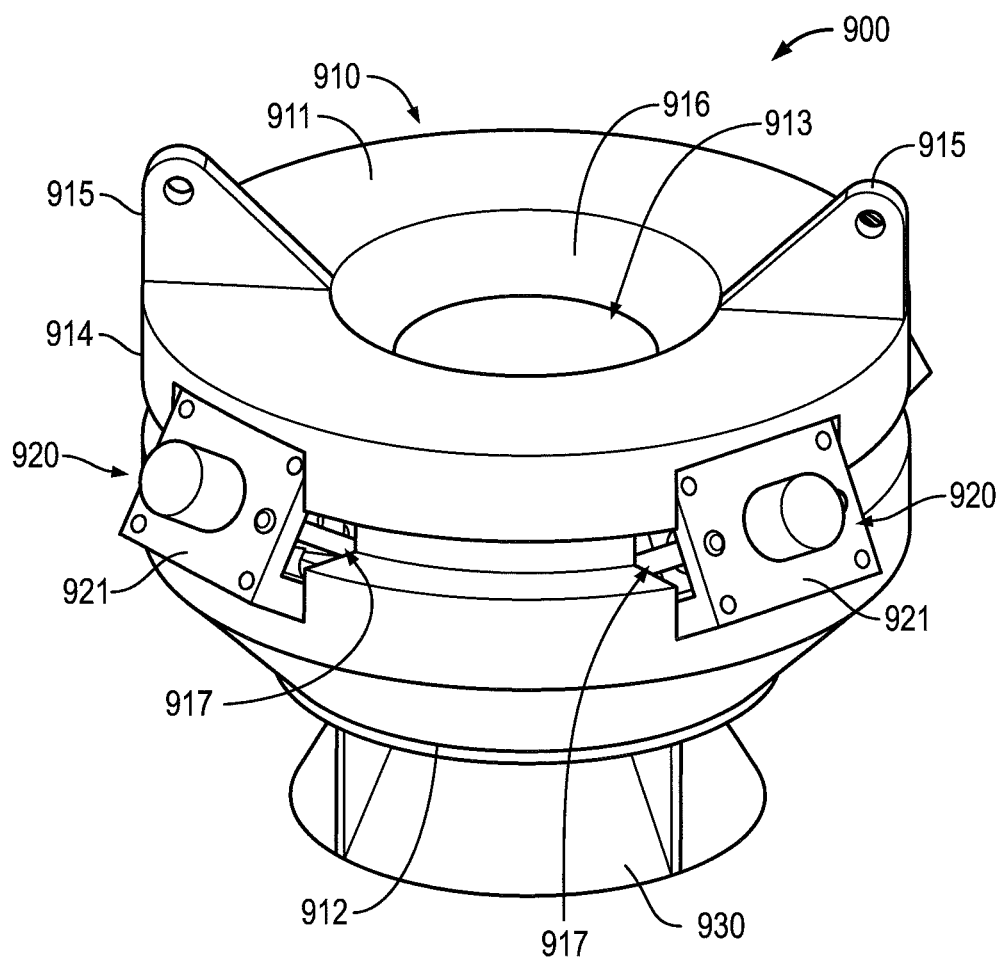


FIG. 9B

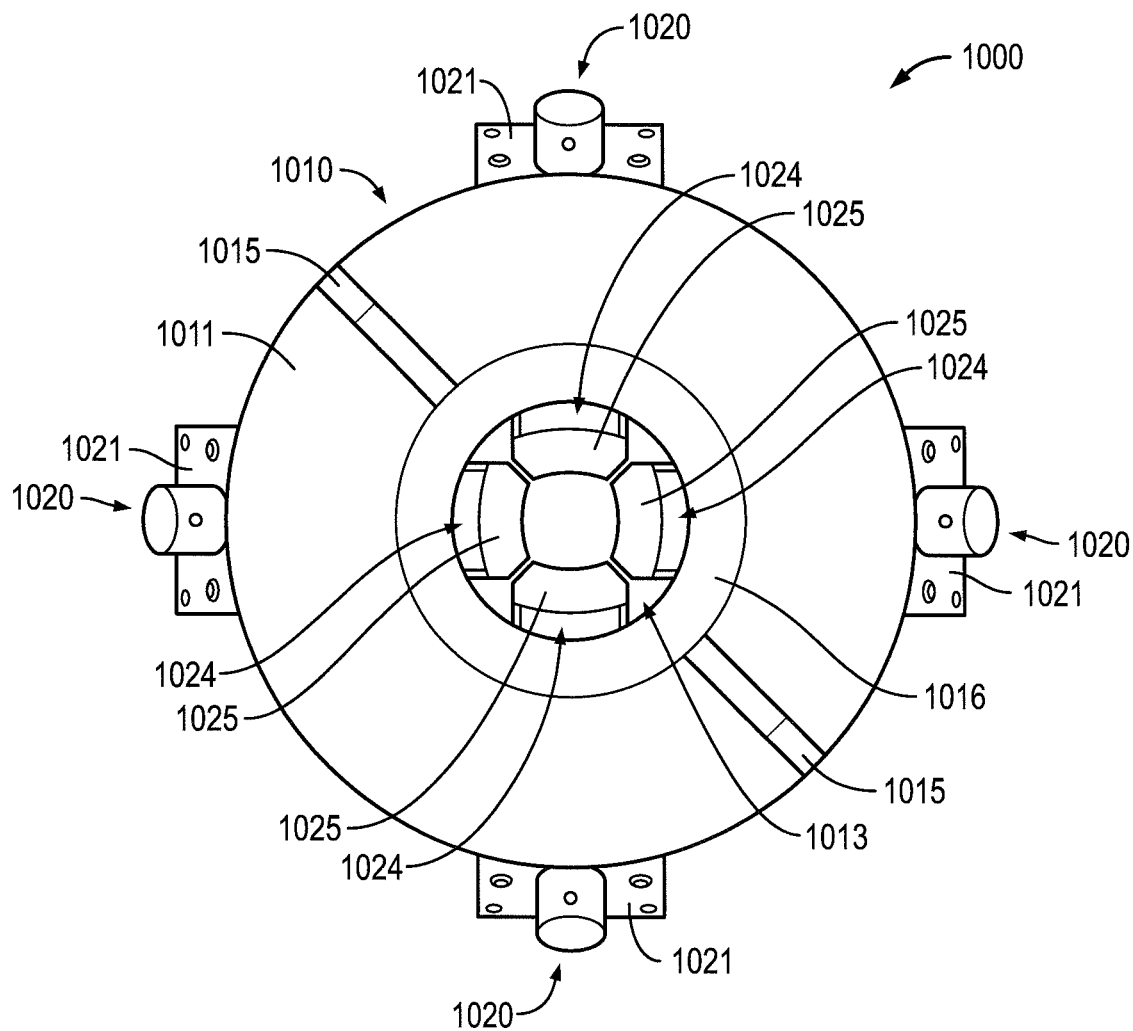


FIG. 10

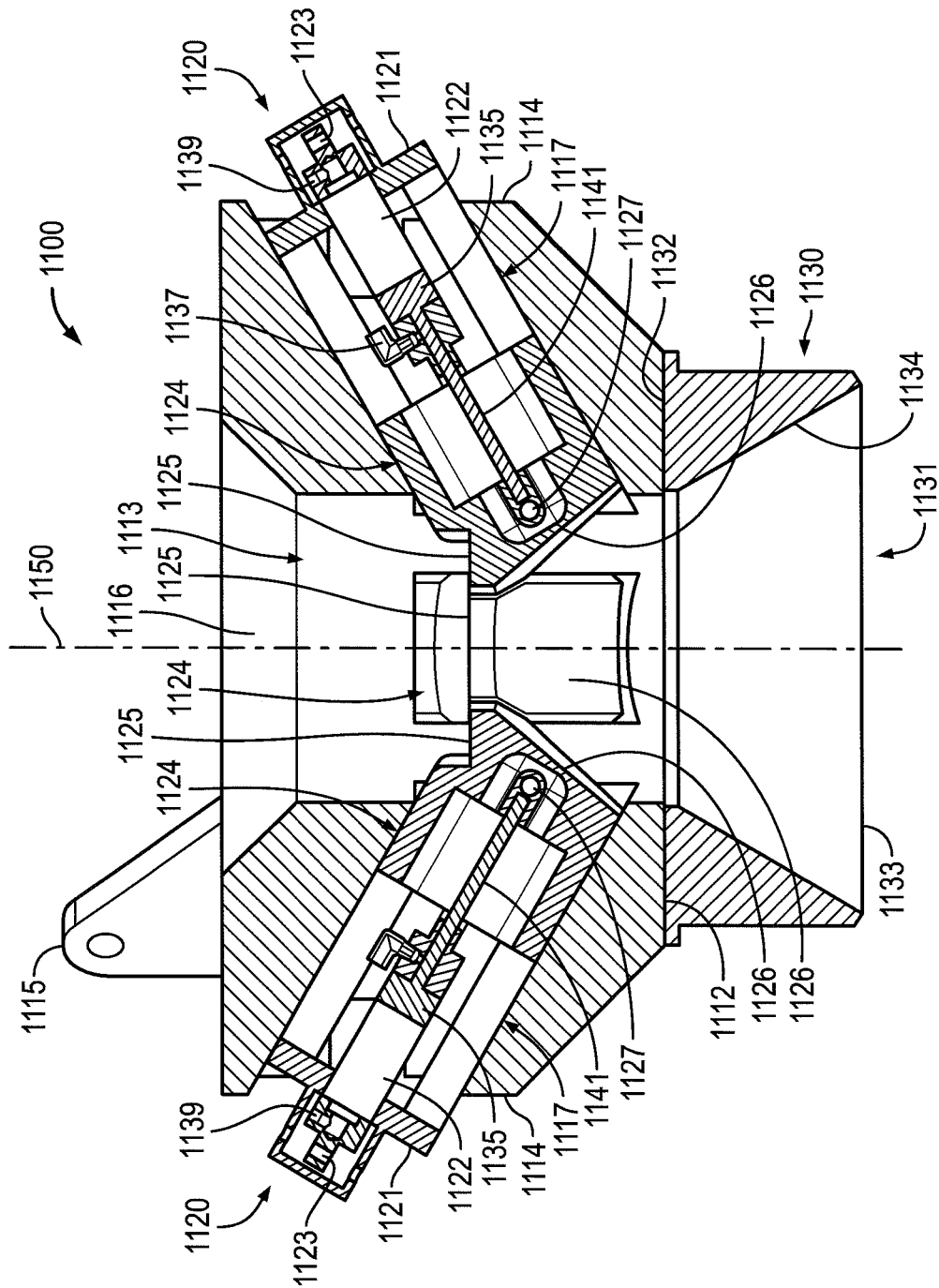


FIG. 11A

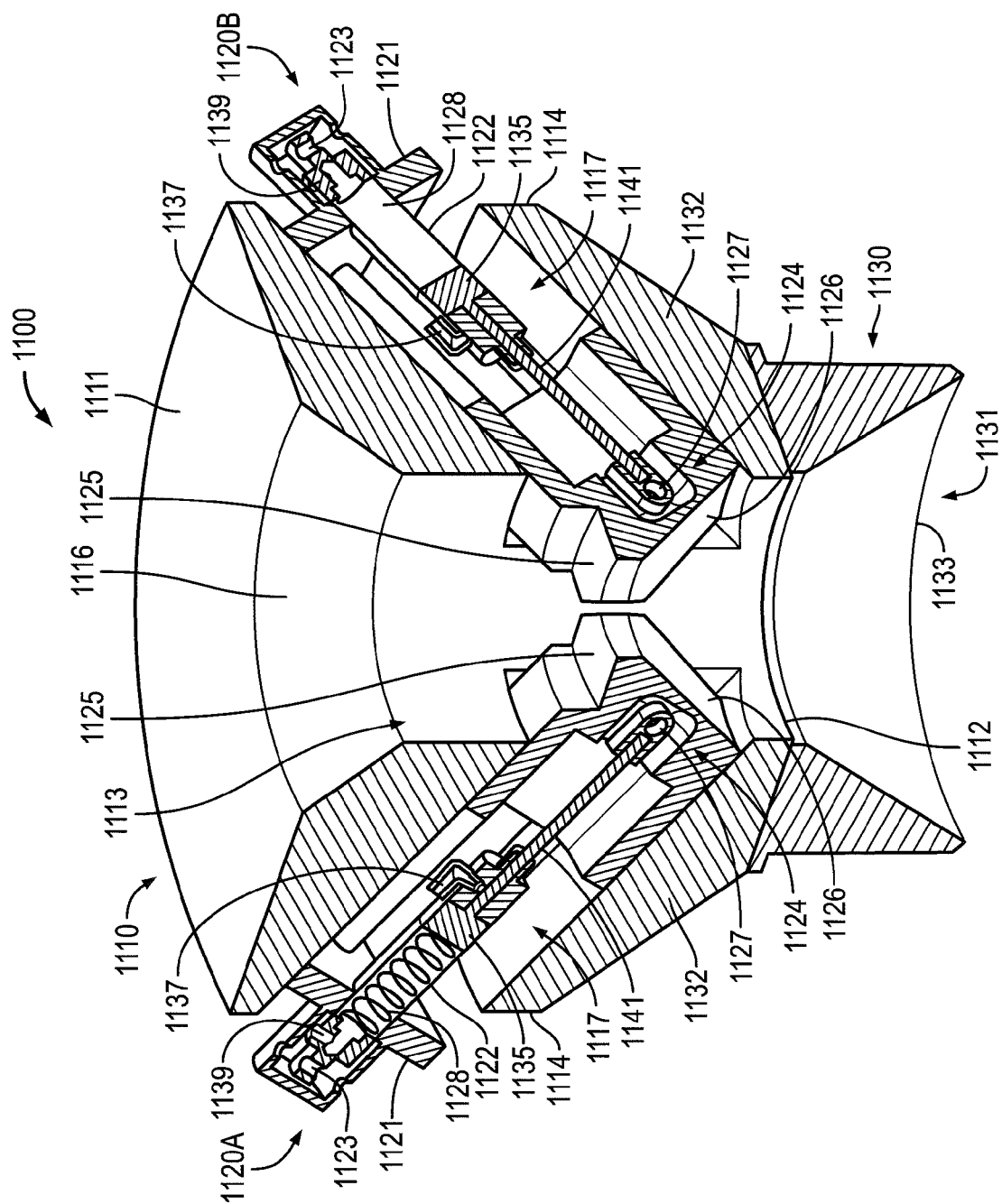


FIG. 11B

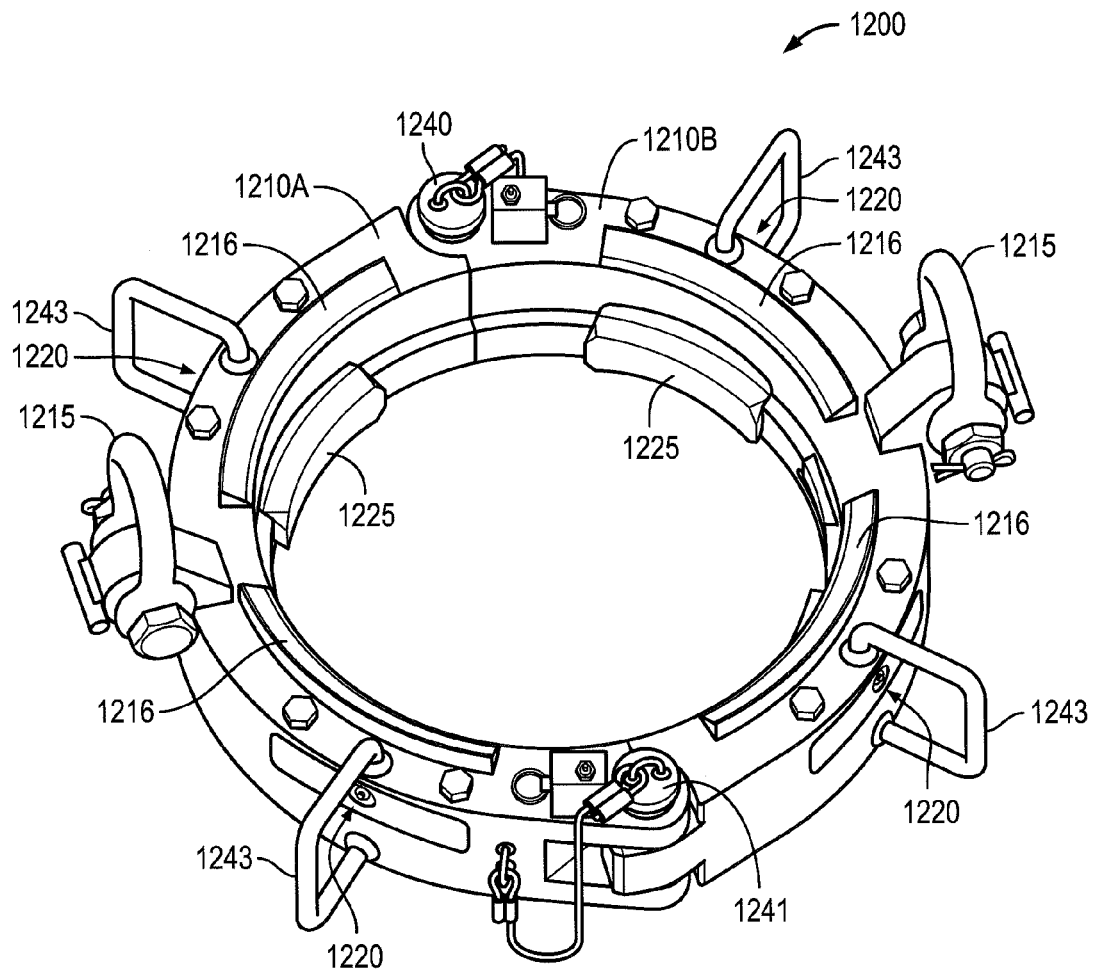


FIG. 12A

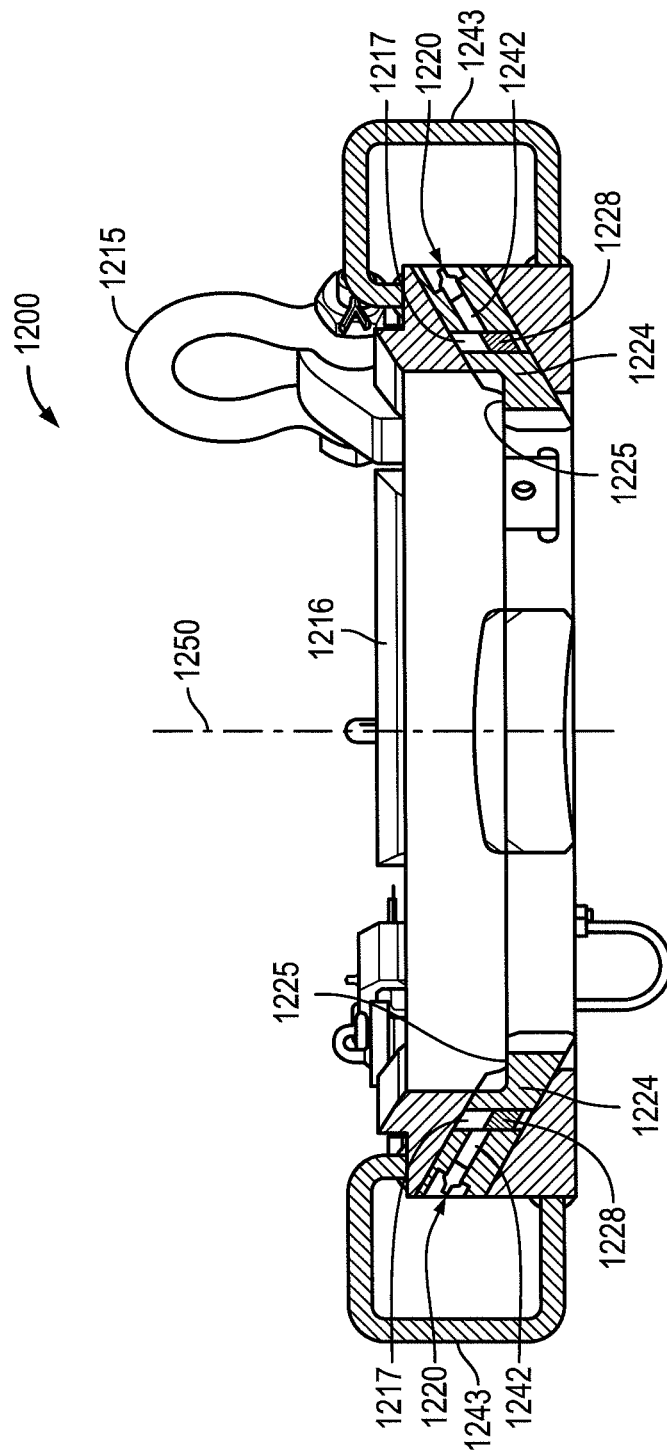


FIG. 12B

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EXTENDED RANGE SINGLE-JOINT ELEVATOR

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/459,340, filed Apr. 30, 2012, issued on Aug. 5, 2014 as U.S. Pat. No. 8,794,684 (the “’340 application”). The ’340 application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 61/481,218, filed May 1, 2011 (the “’218 application”). The ’340 application and the ’218 application are both incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

BACKGROUND

In the oil and gas industry, wellbores are drilled into the Earth using drilling rigs, where tubulars are threaded together to form long tubular strings that are inserted into the wellbore to extract the desired fluid. The tubular string is generally suspended in the borehole using a rig floor-mounted spider, such that each new tubular segment or stand may be threaded onto the end of the previous tubular just above the spider. A single-joint elevator is commonly used to grip and secure the segment or stand to a hoist to lift the segment or stand into position for threading the tubular together.

For installing a string of casing, single-joint elevators generally include a pair of hinged body halves that open to receive a tubular segment and subsequently close to secure the tubular segment within the elevator. Single-joint elevators are specifically adapted for securing and lifting tubular segments having a conventional connection, such as an internally-threaded sleeve that receives and secures an externally-threaded end from each of two tubular segments to secure the segments in a generally abutting relationship. The internally-threaded sleeve is first threaded onto the end of a first tubular segment to form a “box end.” The externally-threaded “pin end” of a second tubular segment is then threaded into the box end to complete the connection between the two segments. When the elevator is in the closed position, i.e., when the hinged body halves are secured shut, the internal diameter of the elevator is less than the outer diameter of the box end. Consequently, the circumferential shoulder formed by the elevator engages the tubular segment at a corresponding shoulder formed by the end of the sleeve, thereby preventing the tubular segment from slipping through the elevator.

At least one challenge encountered by typical single joint elevators is that they are designed to catch a very small range (e.g., outside diameter) of casing. With numerous integral and upset connections currently being used in the field, there are often times variances in the outside diameter of the box end of the casing that prohibit the use of a solitary singlejoint elevator. Instead, two or more single-joint elevators are required to accommodate the varying outside diameters of the pipes and/or connections encountered.

What is needed, therefore, is a multi-range, single-joint elevator capable of being secured to tubulars having a range of deviations in the outside diameter thereof.

SUMMARY

Embodiments of the disclosure may provide an oilfield elevator. The elevator may include first and second body halves pivotally-coupled at a hinge and moveable between an open position and a closed position, and one or more slips slidably received within one or more corresponding down-

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wardly-tapered slots defined in respective inner circumferential surfaces of the first and second body halves, the one or more slips being configured to translate vertically within the one or more tapered slots and, at the same time, translate radially with respect to the first and second body halves. The elevator may also include first and second timing bars coupled to the one or more slips, and first and second tension handles pivotally-coupled to the first and second body halves, respectively, and moveable between a locked position and an unlocked position, the first and second tension handles each having a body that terminates at a connection point. The elevator may further include first and second biasing members each having a first end coupled to the connection point of the first and second tension handles, respectively, and a second end coupled to the first and second timing bars, respectively, wherein the first and second biasing members impart a downward force on the one or more slips via the first and second timing bars when the first and second handles are in the locked position, and wherein the first and second biasing members reduce the downward force on the one or more slips via the first and second timing bars when the first and second handles are in the unlocked position.

Embodiments of the disclosure may further provide a method for engaging a tubular segment. The method may include positioning an elevator adjacent the tubular segment, the elevator including first and second body halves having slips slidably received within corresponding tapered slots defined in the first and second body halves, wherein a first timing bar is coupled to the slips in the first body half and a second timing bar is coupled to the slips in the second body half, and closing the first and second body halves around the tubular segment. The method may further include moving first and second tension handles from an unlocked position to a locked position, the first and second tension handles being pivotally coupled to the first and second body halves, respectively, and each tension handle having a body that terminates at a connection point, and applying a downward force on the first and second timing bars with first and second biasing members having a first end coupled to the connection point of the first and second tension handles, respectively, and a second end coupled to the first and second timing bars, respectively. The method may also include transmitting the downward force from the first and second timing bars to the slips, the slips being configured to translate vertically within the tapered slots and, at the same time, translate radially with respect to the first and second body halves in response to the downward force, wherein the slips translate vertically and radially until coming into contact with an outside surface of the tubular segment.

Embodiments of the disclosure may further provide an apparatus for engaging a tubular segment. The apparatus may include first and second body halves pivotally-coupled at a hinge and moveable between an open position and a closed position, one or more slips slidably received within downwardly and inwardly-tapered slots defined in the first and second body halves, the one or more slips being configured to translate within the tapered slots, and first and second timing bars coupled to the one or more slips. The apparatus may also include first and second tension handles pivotally-coupled to the first and second body halves, respectively, and moveable between a locked position and an unlocked position, each tension handle having a body that is coupled to a connection point, and first and second biasing members, each having a first end coupled to the connection point of the first and second tension handles, respectively, and a second end coupled to the first and second timing bars, respectively, the first and second biasing members being configured to impart

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a downward force on the first and second timing bars when the first and second handles are in the locked position, thereby forcing the one or more slips to translate within the tapered slots until coming into contact with the outside surface of the tubular segment.

Embodiments of this disclosure may further provide an elevator to manipulate a tubular segment, the elevator including an elevator body with a bore formed therethrough having an axis therein, the elevator body including a plurality of openings extending from an outer surface of the elevator body to the bore of the elevator body, and a base member coupled to a bottom surface of the elevator body, the base member having a guide portion that directs the tubular segment into the bore of the elevator body. The elevator also includes a plurality of slip assemblies disposed inside the plurality of openings and coupled to the elevator body, each of the plurality of slip assemblies including an actuator body coupled to the elevator body, a slip, the slip including an engagement surface disposed orthogonal to the axis of the bore of the elevator body that engages the tubular segment, and a guide surface adjacent to a bottom surface of the elevator body that is angled such that the tubular segment slides through the bore of the elevator body until the tubular segment is engaged by the engagement surface, and a powered actuator coupled to the slip and the actuator body, in which the powered actuator is configured to retract the slip from the center of the bore of the elevator body.

Embodiments of this disclosure may further provide a method to manufacture an elevator that engages a tubular segment, the method including forming a bore in an elevator body of the elevator, and forming a plurality of openings in the elevator housing that extend from an outer surface of the elevator body to the bore of the elevator body, assembling a plurality of slip assemblies. Assembling each of the plurality of slip assemblies includes coupling a powered actuator to an actuator body, and coupling the powered actuator to the slip, in which the powered actuator is configured to retract the slip from the biased position and toward the actuator body. The method to manufacture also includes disposing the plurality of slip assemblies inside the plurality of openings of the elevator body, and coupling the plurality of slip assemblies to the elevator body, wherein the plurality of slip assemblies are configured to automatically engage the tubular segment.

Embodiments of this disclosure may further provide a method to add a tubular segment to a drilling string of pipe, the method including rotating the tubular segment up from a non-vertical position to a substantially vertical position and grasping the tubular segment in the vertical position with an elevator. Grasping the tubular segment includes lowering the elevator over an upper end of the tubular segment, separating a plurality of slips from a closed position to an open position by the upper end of the tubular segment, wherein the plurality of slips are biased toward the closed position, and automatically enclosing the plurality of slips about an outer diameter of the tubular segment, wherein a shoulder on the upper end of the tubular segment rests on upper surfaces of the plurality of slips. The method to add a tubular segment also includes lifting the tubular segment with the elevator, positioning the tubular segment over the drilling string of pipe, threading the tubular segment onto the drilling string of pipe by rotating the tubular segment using the elevator, and releasing the tubular segment from the elevator by retracting the slips from the outer diameter of the tubular segment.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

The present disclosure is best understood from the following detailed description when read with the accompanying

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Figures. It is emphasized that, in accordance with the standard practice in the industry, various features are not drawn to scale. In fact, the dimensions of the various features may be arbitrarily increased or reduced for clarity of discussion.

FIG. 1 illustrates an isometric view of an exemplary elevator, according to one or more embodiments of the disclosure.

FIG. 2 illustrates an isometric view of the elevator of FIG. 1 with tension handles in the unlocked position, according to one or more embodiments of the disclosure.

FIG. 3 illustrates an isometric view of the elevator of FIG. 1 in an open position, according to one or more embodiments of the disclosure.

FIG. 4 illustrates a close-up view of a throat of the elevator of FIG. 1, with the tension handle in the unlocked position, according to one or more embodiments of the disclosure.

FIG. 5 illustrates a close-up view of the throat of the elevator of FIG. 1, with the tension handle in the locked position, according to one or more embodiments of the disclosure.

FIG. 6 illustrates a cross-sectional view of an exemplary elevator grasping a tubular segment, according to one or more embodiments of the disclosure.

FIG. 7 illustrates an isometric view of an exemplary elevator grasping a tubular segment, according to one or more embodiments of the disclosure.

FIG. 8 is a flowchart of a method for engaging a tubular segment, according to one or more embodiments of the disclosure.

FIGS. 9A and 9B illustrate isometric views of an elevator, according to one or more embodiments of the disclosure.

FIG. 10 illustrates a top view of an elevator, according to one or more embodiments of the disclosure.

FIGS. 11A and 11B illustrate cross-sectional views of an elevator, according to one or more embodiments of the disclosure.

FIG. 12A illustrates an isometric view of an elevator, according to one or more embodiments of the disclosure.

FIG. 12B illustrates a cross-sectional view of the elevator shown in FIG. 12A.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

It is to be understood that the following disclosure describes several exemplary embodiments for implementing different features, structures, or functions of the invention. Exemplary embodiments of components, arrangements, and configurations are described below to simplify the present disclosure; however, these exemplary embodiments are provided merely as examples and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention. Additionally, the present disclosure may repeat reference numerals and/or letters in the various exemplary embodiments and across the Figures provided herein. This repetition is for the purpose of simplicity and clarity and does not in itself dictate a relationship between the various exemplary embodiments and/or configurations discussed in the various Figures. Moreover, the formation of a first feature over or on a second feature in the description that follows may include embodiments in which the first and second features are formed in direct contact, and may also include embodiments in which additional features may be formed interposing the first and second features, such that the first and second features may not be in direct contact. Finally, the exemplary embodiments presented below may be combined in any combination of ways, i.e., any element from one exemplary embodiment may be used in any other exemplary embodiment, without departing from the scope of the disclosure.

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Additionally, certain terms are used throughout the following description and claims to refer to particular components. As one skilled in the art will appreciate, various entities may refer to the same component by different names, and as such, the naming convention for the elements described herein is not intended to limit the scope of the invention, unless otherwise specifically defined herein. Further, the naming convention used herein is not intended to distinguish between components that differ in name but not function. Additionally, in the following discussion and in the claims, the terms “including” and “comprising” are used in an open-ended fashion, and thus should be interpreted to mean “including, but not limited to.” All numerical values in this disclosure may be exact or approximate values unless otherwise specifically stated. Accordingly, various embodiments of the disclosure may deviate from the numbers, values, and ranges disclosed herein without departing from the intended scope. Furthermore, as it is used in the claims or specification, the term “or” is intended to encompass both exclusive and inclusive cases, i.e., “A or B” is intended to be synonymous with “at least one of A and B,” unless otherwise expressly specified herein.

FIGS. 1-3 illustrate an exemplary oilfield elevator **100**, according to one or more embodiments disclosed. The elevator **100** is moveable between a closed position, as shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, and an open position, as shown in FIG. 3. In one embodiment, the elevator **100** may be a single-joint elevator configured to grasp onto and position a singular tubular segment, such as a drill pipe or casing, for coupling to a tubular string. The elevator **100** may include a first body half **102a** and a second body half **102b** pivotally connected at a hinge **104**. Each body half **102a,b** may have a lifting ear **106a** and **106b**, respectively, integrally formed therewith or connected thereto and configured to be coupled to or otherwise receive links (not shown) in order to position the elevator **100** during tubular makeup operations.

The elevator **100** is moveable between the open and closed positions by pivoting each body half **102a,b** about the axis of the hinge **104**. To help accommodate this movement, one or more positioning handles **111** may be attached to the exterior of the first and second halves **102a,b** to be grasped by a user to manipulate their general position. In other embodiments, the positioning handles **111** may be omitted and an automated opening/closing system (not shown) may be implemented to mechanically open/close the elevator **100**. For example, the elevator **100** may be opened/closed using mechanical devices such as hydraulics, servos, gearing, etc., without departing from the scope of the disclosure.

The elevator **100** may be secured in the closed position with a locking apparatus **108** pivotally-coupled to the first body half **102a** with a pivotal coupling **110**. In other embodiments, the locking apparatus **108** may be pivotally coupled to the second body half **102b**, without departing from the scope of the disclosure. In one embodiment, the pivotal coupling **110** may be spring loaded. A locking handle **112** projects from the locking apparatus **108** and may be grasped by a user to manually bring the first body half **102a** into proximity of the second body half **102b**. Once the first and second body halves **102a,b** are proximally aligned, the locking mechanism **108** may be configured to extend over a latch **114** (best seen in FIG. 3) integrally-formed with the second body half **102b**. The latch **114** may define a perforation **116** (FIG. 3) adapted to receive a pin **118** (partially shown). The pin **118** may be extendable through corresponding perforations (not shown) defined in the locking mechanism **108** and into the perforation **116** to secure the locking mechanism **108** in the closed position. As

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illustrated, the pin **118** may be attached to a cord or cable **120** that is anchored to the locking mechanism **108** at an anchor point **122**.

The first and second body halves **102a** and **102b** each define an inner circumferential surface **124a** and **124b**, respectively. When the elevator **100** is in the closed position, the inner circumferential surfaces **124a,b** cooperatively define a generally circular opening or throat **126** that may be configured to receive and secure a tubular or casing segment. The inner circumferential surfaces **124a,b** may further define a series of tapered slots **128**; one slot is **128** shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, and two slots **128** are shown in FIG. 3. The term “tapered” as used herein refers to the slots **128** being inclined to the axis of the throat **126**, such as being downwardly and inwardly-tapered with respect to the axis of the throat **126**.

The tapered slots **128** may be equidistantly-spaced from each other about the inner circumferential surfaces **124a,b**. In one embodiment, each inner circumferential surface **124a,b** may define a total of two slots **128**, but in other embodiments more or less than two slots **128** may be provided. Moreover, the number of slots **128** defined in either inner circumferential surface **124a,b** does not necessarily have to be equal, but may vary depending on the application.

Each slot **128** may be adapted to slidably receive a slip **130**, such as slips **130a**, **130b**, **130c**, and **130d** (only slips **130a,b,c** are shown in FIG. 1). As illustrated, the slots **128** defined in the first inner circumferential surface **124a** may slidably receive the first slip **130a** and the second slip **130b**, while the slots **128** defined in the second inner circumferential surface **124b** may slidably receive the third slip **130c** and the fourth slip **130d**. Each slip **130a-d** may be partially cylindrical and configured to engage the outside surface of a tubular segment, as will be described in more detail below.

During elevator **100** operation, the slips **130a-d** may be able to translate vertically within their respective slots **128**. To facilitate this vertical translation, each slot **128** may include one or more rails **129** (FIGS. 2 and 3) configured to seat a respective slip **130a-d**. The rails **129** may be configured to extend through a portion of the respective slip **130a-d**, thereby providing a fixed translation path for each slip **130a-d**. In at least one embodiment, each rail **129** may be encompassed by a compression spring **152** (FIG. 4) adapted to continuously bias the respective slip **130a-d** upward and into an “open” position. In other embodiments, the compression springs **152** may be separate from the rails **129** but nonetheless work in concert therewith to facilitate the vertical translation of the slips **130a-d**.

Each slip **130a-d** may be maintained within its respective slot **128** using a retainer plate **131** fastened to the first or second body halves **102a,b** adjacent the upper end of each slot **128**. The retainer plates **131** may be fastened to the first or second body halves **102a,b** by any known method including, but not limited to, mechanical fasteners.

A first timing bar **132a** may be used to moveably couple the first slip **130a** to the second slip **130b**, such that when the first slip **130a** moves, the second slip **130b** moves as well, and vice versa. A second timing bar **132b** may be used to moveably couple the third slip **130c** to the fourth slip **130d** such that when the third slip **130c** moves, the fourth slip **130d** moves as well, and vice versa. One or more mechanical fasteners **134** (e.g., bolts, screws, etc.) may be used to secure the timing bars **132a,b** to the respective slips **130a-d**. In other embodiments, however, the timing bars **132a,b** may be attached to the respective slips **130a-d** via other attachments, such as welding, brazing, adhesives, or combinations thereof, without departing from the scope of the disclosure.

The elevator **100** may further include first and second tension handles **140a** and **140b** pivotally coupled to the first and second body halves **102a** and **102b**, respectively. FIG. 1 shows the tension handles **140a,b** in a “locked” position, and FIGS. 2 and 3 show the tension handles **140a,b** in an “unlocked” position. In the locked position, each tension handle **140a,b** may rest or otherwise be seated within a recessed pocket defined in the outer circumferential surface of each body half **102a,b**, respectively. Moreover, each tension handle **140a,b** may include a spring-loaded body fixture **136** (FIG. 1) adapted to bias the tension handle **140a,b** into its respective recessed pocket.

To unlock the tension handles **140a,b**, a user may pull radially-outward on the tension handle **140b** (or **140a**), as indicated by arrow A in FIG. 1, to remove it from the recessed pocket. Once removed from the recessed pocket, the tension handle **140b** may swivel downward and back toward the body half **140b**, as indicated by arrow B. Locking the tension handles **140a,b** back in place within the recessed pockets can be accomplished by a reversal of the above-described steps.

Referring now to FIGS. 4 and 5, with continuing reference to FIGS. 1-3, illustrated are isometric views of the elevator **100** with the tension handles **140a,b** in the unlocked (FIG. 4) and locked (FIG. 5) positions, according to one or more embodiments of the disclosure. Although only the first body half **102a**, including the first tension handle **140a**, is shown in FIGS. 4 and 5 and described below, it will be appreciated that the following description is equally applicable to the components of the second body half **102b**, especially including the second tension handle **140b**, but will not be discussed herein for the sake of brevity.

As illustrated, the first tension handle **140a** may include a body **138** that extends generally into the throat **126** through an opening **139** defined in the first body half **102a**. The opening **139** may generally extend from the outer surface of the first body half **102a** to the inner circumferential surface **124a**. The body **138** may terminate at a connection point **142** configured to be coupled to a biasing member **144**, for example, at a first end **146** of the biasing member **144**. In one embodiment, the biasing member **144** may be a tension spring, as illustrated. In other embodiments, however, the biasing member **144** may be any other device capable of providing a biasing force such as, but not limited to, pneumatic devices, hydraulic devices, servo devices, electromagnets, or combinations thereof.

In the illustrated embodiment, the connection point **142** includes a ring structure, but in other embodiments the connection point **142** may include any other type of structure capable of being coupled to the biasing member **144**. The biasing member **144** may also include a second end **148** configured to be coupled to the first timing bar **132a**. In one embodiment, the first timing bar **132a** may define one or more holes **150** for receiving or otherwise securing the second end **148** of the biasing member **144**. It will be appreciated, however, that the second end **148** may be secured to the first timing bar **132a** in any known manner, without departing from the scope of the disclosure.

When the first tension handle **140a** is in the unlocked position (FIG. 4), the biasing member **144** is able to retract, at least partially, and thereby reduce the downward force exhibited on the first timing bar **132a**. As the downward force on the timing bar **132a** is removed or otherwise diminished, the compression springs **152** are able to expand and force the first and second slips **130a,b** vertically-upward and into the open position within their respective slots **128**. Since the slots **128** are inclined to the axis of the throat **126**, upward axial movement of the slips **130a,b** simultaneously results in a radial movement of the slips **130a,b** away from the center of the

throat **126**. Consequently, in the open position the slips **130a,b** provide the largest throat **126** area.

When the first tension handle **140a** is returned to its locked position (FIG. 5), the connection point **142** pulls down on and engages the biasing member **144** which transmits a generally downward force on the first timing bar **132a**. As a result, the first timing bar **132a** conveys a generally downward force on the first and second slips **130a,b** and their accompanying compression springs **152**, thereby causing the axial downward movement of the slips **130a,b**. Moreover, because of the tapered disposition of the slots **128**, downward axial movement of the slips **130a,b** simultaneously results in a radial movement of the slips **130a,b** toward the center of the throat **126**. Consequently, in the closed position the slips **130a,b** present the smallest throat **126** area for the elevator **100**.

Referring to FIG. 6, illustrated is a cross-sectional view of the exemplary elevator **100** as it engages a casing or tubular segment **602**, according to one or more embodiments. In one embodiment, the tubular segment **602** may include a sleeve **604** coupled thereto. In other embodiments, the sleeve **604** may be a collar or other upset that is integrally-formed with the tubular segment **602**. The sleeve **604** may include a circumferential shoulder **606** adapted to engage the elevator **100** at each slip **130a-d** (only the second and third slips **130b** and **130d** are shown in FIG. 6).

The slips **130a-d** may engage the tapered surface **608** of the respective slot **128** with a corresponding inclined surface **610**. Via this sloping engagement between the tapered surface **608** and the inclined surface **610**, the radial movement of the slips **130a-d** toward or away from the center of the elevator **100** is realized. Consequently, the collective radial circumference of the slips **130a-d** is able to increase and/or decrease over a fixed range, thereby manipulating the radius of the throat **126** and enabling the elevator **100** to receive and properly secure tubular segments **602** having a varied and increased range of an outside diameter O_d . As will be appreciated, this may be achieved without requiring any adjustment to or replacement of the elevator **100**.

With the elevator **100** in the open position, as shown in FIG. 3, the tubular segment **602** may enter the throat **126**. Once the elevator **100** is closed, the tension handles **140a,b** (FIGS. 1-3) may be moved into the locked position, as shown in FIG. 5. Moving the tension handles **140a,b** into the locked position applies a spring force on the slips **130a-d** that results in the axial-downward and radial-inward movement of the slips **130a-d**. As illustrated in FIG. 6, the second and third slips **130b,d** will move axially-downward and radially-inward until eventually engaging the outside surface **612** of the tubular segment **602**. The weight of the tubular segment **602** may shift the tubular segment **602** vertically until the circumferential shoulder **606** engages the slips **130b,d**, thereby impeding its further downward progress. Via this sloping engagement between the tapered surface **608** and the inclined surface **610** of each slip **130b,d**, any increased force in the downward direction against the slips **130b,d** only tightens the engagement with the slips **130b,d** on the outside diameter O_d of the tubular segment **602**.

Once the tubular segment **602** is properly coupled to a tubular string or otherwise securely captured by another lifting mechanism, the tension handles **140a,b** may be unlocked in preparation for receiving a new tubular segment **602**. Unlocking the tension handles **140a,b** releases the spring forces on the slips **130a-d** and allows the slips **130a-d** to move axially-upward and into the open position, thereby releasing the tubular segment **602** from engagement with the elevator **100**.

Referring to FIG. 7, illustrated is an isometric view of the exemplary oilfield elevator **100** engaged with a tubular segment **702**, according to one or more embodiments disclosed. As described above, the elevator may be engaged to the tubular segment **702** at a sleeve **704**. Those skilled in the art will recognize the several advantages provided by the elevator **100**. For example, the elevator **100** is able to securely grasp onto multiple outside diameters within a nominal tubular segment **702** size. As a result, significant savings in money and time may be gained that would otherwise be spent in removing and replacing the elevator **100** or adjusting the settings for different outside diameters.

As used herein, the term “single-joint elevator” is intended to distinguish the elevator from a string elevator that is used to support the weight of the entire pipe string. Rather, a “single joint elevator” is used to grip and lift a tubular segment as is necessary to add or remove the tubular segment to or from a tubular string. Furthermore, a pipe or tubular “segment”, as that term is used herein, is inclusive of either a single pipe or tubular joint or a stand made up of multiple joints of a pipe or other tubular that will be lifted as a unit. In the context of the present disclosure, a tubular segment does not include a tubular string that extends into the well.

Referring now to FIG. 8, illustrated is a method **800** for engaging a tubular segment. In one embodiment, the method **800** may include positioning an elevator adjacent the tubular segment, as at **802**. The elevator may include first and second body halves that have slips that are slidably received within corresponding tapered slots. The corresponding tapered slots may be defined in the first and second body halves. Moreover, a first timing bar may be coupled to the slips in the first body half and a second timing bar may be coupled to the slips in the second body half. The method **800** may further include closing the first and second body halves around the tubular segment, as at **804**.

First and second tension handles may then be moved from an unlocked position to a locked position, as at **806**. In one embodiment, the first and second tension handles may be pivotally-coupled to the first and second body halves, respectively, and each tension handle may have a body that terminates at a connection point. The method **800** may further include applying a downward force on the first and second timing bars with first and second biasing members, as at **808**. The first and second biasing members may each have a first end coupled to the connection point of the first and second tension handles, respectively, and a second end coupled to the first and second timing bars, respectively. The downward force may then be transmitted from the first and second timing bars to the slips, as at **810**. The slips may be configured to translate vertically within the tapered slots and at the same time translate radially with respect to the first and second body halves in response to the downward force. Accordingly, the slips may translate vertically and radially until coming into contact with an outside surface of the tubular segment.

Referring now to FIGS. 9A and 9B, an elevator **900** according to one or more embodiments is shown. In one or more embodiments, the elevator **900** may include an elevator body **910**, slip assemblies **920**, and a base member **930**. The elevator body **910** may have a bore **913** formed therethrough with a longitudinal axis **950** defined therethrough. In one or more embodiments, the bore **913** formed through the elevator body **910** may receive a tubular segment (not shown), and the elevator **900** may be used to secure and lift the tubular segment. In one or more embodiments, the tubular segment may include a tubular segment and may be part of a string of

tubular segments. As such, in one or more embodiments, the elevator **900** may be used to secure and lift a string of tubular segments.

Further, in one or more embodiments, the elevator body **910** may have a pair of lifting ears **915** disposed thereon. For example, as shown, the lifting ears **915** may be formed on a top surface **911** of the elevator body **910**, and the lifting ears **915** may be configured to bear the entire load of the elevator **900** and the tubular segment (not shown) when lifting the tubular segment. Additionally, in one or more embodiments, the elevator body **910** may have a guide portion **916** formed on the top surface **911** of the elevator body **910**. In one or more embodiments, the guide portion **916** may be adjacent to the bore **913** and may direct a tubular segment into the bore **913** of the elevator body **910**. In one or more embodiments, the guide portion **916** may include a tapered surface formed on the elevator body **910** configured to direct a tubular segment into the bore **913** of the elevator body **910**. In one or more embodiments, the guide portion **916** of the elevator body **910** may be a tapered surface that extends from a top surface **911** of the elevator body **910** toward a center of the elevator body **910**, e.g., toward the slip assemblies **920**, such that a diameter of the bore **913** decreases from the top surface **911** of the elevator body **910** to the center of the elevator body **910**.

Still referring to FIGS. 9A and 9B, in one or more embodiments, the elevator body **910** may have a plurality of openings **917** formed therein, in which each of the openings **917** may be configured to receive a slip assembly, e.g., a slip assembly **920**. In one or more embodiments, the plurality of openings **917** may be formed through the elevator body **910**, e.g., from an outer surface **914** of the elevator body **910** to the bore **913** of the elevator body **910**.

In one or more embodiments, each of the slip assemblies **920** of the elevator **900** may include an actuator body **921**, a powered actuator **922**, a biasing member (not shown), and slips (not shown). In one or more embodiments, the slip assemblies **920** may be disposed within the openings **917** of the elevator body **910**. Further, in one or more embodiments, the actuator body **921** of each of the slip assemblies **920** may be coupled to the elevator body **910** to maintain the slip assemblies **920** within the openings **917** of the elevator body **910**. Furthermore, in one or more embodiments, the powered actuator **922** of each of the slip assemblies **920** may be coupled to the actuator body **921**. In one or more embodiments, the powered actuator **922** of each of the slip assemblies **920** may include a hydraulic cylinder and may be connected to the actuator body **921**. For example, in one or more embodiments, the powered actuator **922** of each of the slip assemblies **920** may include a hydraulic cylinder connected to the actuator body **921** by a pin (not shown). However, other powered actuators known in the art may be used. Further, other means of coupling known in the art may be used to connect the powered actuator **922** to the actuator body **921**.

Further, in one or more embodiments, the base member **930** may be coupled to a bottom surface **912** of the elevator body **910**, and the base member **930** may have a bore (not shown) formed therethrough and a guide portion (not shown) formed thereon. In one or more embodiments, the bore of the base member **930** may be substantially aligned with the bore **913** of the elevator body **910**. Further, in one or more embodiments, the guide portion of the base member **930** may be configured to direct the tubular segment (not shown) into the bore **913** of the elevator body **910**. For example, the guide portion of the base member **930** may include a tapered surface formed on the base member **930** configured to direct a tubular segment into the bore of the base member **930**. In one or more embodiments, the guide portion of the base member **930** may

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taper in a direction that is substantially opposite to a direction the guide portion 916 of the elevator body 910 tapers.

Referring to FIG. 10, a top view of an elevator 1000 having slips 1024 in a closed position are shown in accordance with embodiments disclosed herein. In one or more embodiments, the elevator 1000 may include at least an elevator body 1010 having a bore 1013 formed therethrough and slip assemblies 1020 coupled thereto. Further, in one or more embodiments, the elevator body 1010 may have a pair of lifting ears 1015 disposed on a top surface 1011 of the elevator body 1010 that may be configured to bear the entire load of the elevator 1000 and the tubular segment (not shown) when lifting the tubular segment. Furthermore, in one or more embodiments, the elevator body 1010 may have a guide portion 1016 formed on the top surface 1011. In one or more embodiments, the guide portion 1016 may include a tapered surface, and the guide portion 1016 may be adjacent to the bore 1013 and may direct a tubular segment into the bore 1013 of the elevator body 1010.

Further, in one or more embodiments, the elevator body 1010 may have openings (not shown) in which the slip assemblies 1020 may be disposed and coupled. In one or more embodiments, each of the slip assemblies 1020 may include an actuator body 1021, a powered actuator (not shown), the slip 1024, and a biasing member (not shown). As discussed above, in one or more embodiments, the actuator body 1021 may be coupled to the elevator body 1010 such that the slip assemblies 1020 are maintained within openings (not shown) of the elevator body 1010. Further, in one or more embodiments, the powered actuator may be coupled to the actuator body 1021. Moreover, in one or more embodiments, the powered actuator may also be coupled to the slip 1024 such that the slips may be retracted from the bore 1013 of the elevator body 1010, e.g., in a direction away from the longitudinal axis 950 shown in FIG. 9A. In addition, in one or more embodiments, the biasing member may be coupled to the slip 1024 such that the slip 1024 is biased toward the center of the bore 1013, which is a closed position. In other words, in one or more embodiments, the biasing member may be coupled to the slip 1024 such that the slip 1024 is biased in a direction toward the longitudinal axis 950 shown in FIG. 9A. Alternatively, one or more embodiments may not include a biasing member. In one or more embodiments, the weight of the slip acting on an inclined surface of the opening 1017, in which the slip 1024 is disposed, 1024 may cause the slip 1024 to be biased toward a closed position without the use of a biasing member. As such, in one or more embodiments, the plurality of slips 1024 may be configured to automatically set, e.g., engage with a tubular segment, by way of the biasing member or without the use of the biasing member. In one or more embodiments, the slips 1024 may contact adjacent slips 1024.

In one or more embodiments, each slip 1024 may include an engagement surface 1025 and a guide surface (not shown). In one or more embodiments, the engagement surface 1025 may be cut on each of the slips 1024 such that the engagement surface 1025 is orthogonal to an axis, e.g., axis 950 as shown in FIG. 9A, formed by the bore 1013. In one or more embodiments, the engagement surface 1025 may be configured to engage a portion of a tubular segment, e.g., a shoulder of a segment of shouldered pipe. The slips 1024 according to one or more embodiments will be discussed in greater detail below.

Referring to FIGS. 11A and 11B, cross-sectional views of an elevator 1100 according to one or more embodiments are shown. As shown, in one or more embodiments, the elevator 1100 may include an elevator body 1110, slip assemblies 1120, and a base member 1130.

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As discussed above, the elevator body 1110 may have a bore 1113 formed therethrough and a longitudinal axis 1150 defined therethrough. In addition, in one or more embodiments, the elevator body 1110 may include a pair of lifting ears 1115 (only one shown in FIG. 11) formed on a top surface 1111 of the elevator body 1110. Further, the elevator body may have a guide portion 1116 formed on the top surface 1111 of the elevator body 1110 adjacent to the bore 1113 that directs a tubular segment (not shown) into the bore 1113 of the elevator body 1110. In one or more embodiments, the guide portion 1116 may include a tapered surface formed on the elevator body 1110 configured to direct a tubular segment into the bore 1113 of the elevator body 1110.

Furthermore, in one or more embodiments, the elevator body 1110 may include openings 1117 formed therein. In one or more embodiments, the openings 1117 may be configured to receive the slip assemblies 1120. In one or more embodiments, the openings 1117 formed in the elevator body 1110 may extend from an outer surface 1114 of the elevator body 1110 to the bore 1113. In one or more embodiments, a cross-section of the openings may be configured to fit an outer profile of the slip assemblies 1120. For example, in one or more embodiments, a cross-section of the openings 1117 may be relatively square in shape, and the openings 1117 may start near the top surface 1111 on the outer surface 1114 and finish near a bottom surface 1112 in the bore 1113 of the elevator body 1110.

In one or more embodiments, the slip assemblies 1120A and 1120B may be disposed within the openings 1117 and may be coupled to the elevator body 1110. As discussed above, each of the slip assemblies 1120A and 1120B may include an actuator body 1121, a powered actuator 1122, and a slip 1124. As discussed above, in one or more embodiments, each actuator body 1121 may be coupled to the elevator body 1110 such that the slip assemblies 1120 may be maintained within the openings 1117. Further, in one or more embodiments, each powered actuator 1122 may be coupled to the actuator body 1121 such that the powered actuator 1122 may be maintained within the opening 1117 and such that the powered actuator 1122 extends toward the bore 1113 of the elevator body 1110. In one or more embodiments, a pin 1123 may be used to couple the powered actuator 1122 to the actuator body 1121. However, other means of coupling known in the art may be used to connect the powered actuator 1122 to the actuator body 1121.

Furthermore, referring to FIGS. 11A and 11B, in one or more embodiments, the powered actuator 1122 may be coupled to the slip 1124 such that the slip 1124 may move within the opening 1117 of the elevator body 1110 between a closed position and an open position. In one or more embodiments, the closed position may be one in which the slips 1124 are extended from the opening 1117 within the bore 1113 of the elevator body 1110 until the powered actuator 1122 is fully stroked. In one or more embodiments, the open position may be one in which the slips 1124 are retracted from the bore 1113 of the elevator body 1110 into the openings 1117 such that the slips 1124 may not retain a tubular segment (not shown). However, in one or more embodiments, the closed position may be a position in which the slips 1124 are extended from the opening 1117 within the bore 1113 and contact a portion of a tubular segment. As such, the closed position of the slips 1124 according to embodiments disclosed herein is not necessarily limited to a position of the slips 1124 in which the power actuator 1122 is fully stroked. In one or more embodiments, a pin 1127 may be used to couple the slip 1124 to the powered actuator 1122. However,

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other means of coupling known in the art may be used to connect the powered actuator 1122 to the actuator body 1121.

In one or more embodiments, powered actuator 1122 may include a hydraulic cylinder, in which hydraulic fluid may be introduced into/withdrawn on opposite sides of a hydraulic piston 1135 through one or more hydraulic ports 1137 and 1139. For example, in one or more embodiments, hydraulic fluid may be introduced into the powered actuator 1122 through an “opening” port 1137 in order to withdraw the slip 1124 (connected to piston 1135 through rod 1141) away from bore 1150 and into one or more positions between fully open and fully closed. Similarly, hydraulic fluid may be introduced into the powered actuator 1122 through an “closing” port 1139 in order to extend the slip 1124 toward bore 1150 and into one or more positions between fully open and fully closed. As would be understood by those having ordinary skill, introducing fluid into opening port 1137 may require removal of fluid from closing port 1139 and vice versa. In alternative embodiments, a biasing member (e.g., a spring) may bias piston 1135 toward either a fully open or a fully closed position, such that loss of hydraulic power to either or both ports 1137 and 1139 may allow piston 1135 (and slip 1124 connected to piston 1135 through rod 1141) to move in a default or “failsafe” direction. Alternatively, the weight of the slip 1124 itself may bias the piston 1135 and slip 1124 assembly into a desired failsafe direction within opening 1117 absent additional biasing members.

For example, as shown in FIG. 11B, the slip assembly 1120A includes a biasing member 1128. In one or more embodiments, the biasing member 1128 may be disposed within the powered actuator 1122. In one or more embodiments, the biasing member 1128 may be disposed outside of the powered actuator but within the slip assembly 1120A such that a portion of the biasing member 1128 is engaged with the actuator body 1121 and another portion of the biasing member 1128 is engaged with the slip 1124. In one or more embodiments, the biasing member 1128 may be a coil spring and may be configured to bias the slip 1124 in a direction toward the bore 1113, e.g., toward a closed position. Alternatively, in one or more embodiments, the biasing member 1128 may be configured to bias the slip 1124 in a direction away from the bore 1113, e.g., toward a fully open position.

Additionally, referring to FIGS. 11A and 11B, in one or more embodiments, each of the slips 1124 may include an engagement surface 1125 and a guide surface 1126. In one or more embodiments, the engagement surface 1125 may be disposed on an upper surface of the slip 1124. In one or more embodiments, the engagement surface 1125 of the slips 1124 may be configured to engage a portion of a tubular segment (not shown) and may be configured to hold the tubular segment by a shoulder (not shown) of the tubular segment. In one or more embodiments, the engagement surface 1125 may extend in a direction that is orthogonal to the longitudinal axis 1150 of the bore 1113 of the elevator body 1110. As such, the engagement surface 1125 of the slips 1124 may be configured to engage a shoulder of a shouldered tubular segment, which may allow the shoulder of a shouldered tubular segment to be supported by the slips 1124.

Further, in one or more embodiments, the guide surface 1126 may be a tapered surface formed on a bottom surface of the slip 1124. The guide surface 1126 may be disposed such that a tubular segment (not shown) that is inserted into the elevator 1100 may exert a force on the slip assemblies 1120 in order to overcome the biasing force imposed on the slips 1124 and to separate the slips 1124 to allow the tubular segment to pass through the bore 1113 of the elevator body 1110. In other words, the guide surface 1126 of each of the slips 1124 may

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be configured to guide a tubular segment within the elevator 1100 and may allow the tubular segment to be secured and supported within the elevator 1100.

Still referring to FIGS. 11A and 11B, in one or more embodiments, a top surface 1132 of the base member 1130 may be connected to the bottom surface 1112 of the elevator body 1110 such that the base member 1130 may direct a tubular segment (not shown) into the bore 1113 of the elevator body 1110. In one or more embodiments, the base member 1130 may have a bore 1131 formed therethrough. Further, in one or more embodiments, the base member 1130 may include a guide portion 1134 that may be configured to direct a tubular segment into the bore 1113 of the elevator body 1110. In one or more embodiments, the guide portion 1134 of the base member 1130 may be a tapered surface that extends from a bottom surface 1133 of the base member 1130 to the top surface 1132 of the base member 1130 such that a diameter of the bore 1131 decreases from the bottom surface 1133 to the top surface 1132.

One or more aspects of the present invention are directed to a method to manufacture an elevator that engages a tubular segment. In one or more embodiments, the method to manufacture may include forming a bore in an elevator body of the elevator, forming a plurality of openings in the elevator housing that extend from an outer surface of the elevator body to the bore of the elevator body, and assembling a plurality of slip assemblies. In one or more embodiments, assembling each of the plurality of slip assemblies may include coupling a powered actuator to an actuator body, and coupling the powered actuator to the slip, in which the powered actuator is configured to retract the slip from the biased position and toward the actuator body. In one or more embodiments, the method to manufacture may also include disposing the plurality of slip assemblies inside the plurality of openings of the elevator body, and coupling the plurality of slip assemblies to the elevator body, in which the plurality of slip assemblies are configured to automatically engage the tubular segment.

In one or more embodiments, assembling the plurality of slip assemblies may also include coupling a biasing member to a slip such that the slip is biased away from the actuator body toward a biased position. Further, in one or more embodiments, the method to manufacture may also include coupling a base member to a bottom surface of the elevator body, in which the base member is configured to direct the tubular segment into the bore of the elevator body.

In one or more embodiments, a tubular segment having at least two distinct outer diameters such that a shoulder exists may be raised to stand vertically and may be added to a string of pipes. In one or more embodiments, an elevator, as described above, may be lowered over an end of the tubular segment that is standing vertically. While the elevator is lowered over the end of the tubular segment, a base member of the elevator, e.g., a guide portion of the base member, may direct the tubular segment into a bore of an elevator body of the elevator.

Further, in one or more embodiments, slips that are biased toward a center of the bore of the elevator body may be separated away from each other by the tubular segment, which may allow the tubular segment to pass through the bore of the elevator body. For example, referring back to FIG. 10, the slips 1024 may be biased toward a center of the bore 1013 of the elevator body 1010. In one or more embodiments, a tubular segment (not shown) may be disposed in the bore 1013, which may engage the slips 1024, e.g., engage with the guide surface of 1126 shown in FIG. 11A, which may cause the slips 1024 to be separated away from each other. Furthermore, in one or more embodiments, the biasing force imposed

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on the slips, e.g., by way of a biasing member or by way of the weight of each of the slips disposed on an inclined surface of the openings **1117**, may cause the slips to collapse around the smaller diameter of the outer diameters of the tubular segment. As such, in one or more embodiments, the slips may collapse around the smaller diameter of the outer diameters of the tubular segment such that the shoulder on the tubular segment may rest on and be held by an engagement surface of the slips.

In one or more embodiments, the tubular segment grasped by the elevator may be lifted by lifting ears, e.g., the lifting ears **915** shown in FIG. **9A**, on a top surface of the elevator body and may be positioned above a string of tubular segments. Further, in one or more embodiments, the elevator may engage the tubular segment with the string of tubular segments and may rotate such that the tubular segment is threaded to the string of tubular segments. Once the tubular segment is connected to the string of tubular segments, powered actuators may retract the slips away from the tubular segment, and the elevator may be raised off of the string of tubular segments.

As such, one or more aspects of the present invention are directed to a method to add a tubular segment to a drilling string of pipe. In one or more embodiments, the method for adding a tubular segment to a drilling string of pipe may include rotating the tubular segment up from a non-vertical position to a substantially vertical position and grasping the tubular segment in the vertical position with an elevator. In one or more embodiments, grasping the tubular segment in the vertical position with an elevator may include lowering the elevator over an upper end of the tubular segment, separating a plurality of slips from a closed position to an open position by the upper end of the tubular segment, in which the plurality of slips are biased toward the closed position, and automatically enclosing the plurality of slips about an outer diameter of the tubular segment, e.g., by way of a biasing member or by way of the weight of each of the slips acting on an inclined surface of the opening in which the slips is disposed, in which a shoulder on the upper end of the tubular segment rests on upper surfaces of the plurality of slips. In one or more embodiments, the method may also include lifting the tubular segment with the elevator, positioning the tubular segment over the drilling string of pipe, threading the tubular segment onto the drilling string of pipe by rotating the tubular segment using the elevator, and releasing the tubular segment from the elevator by retracting the slips from the outer diameter of the tubular segment.

In one or more embodiments, each of the plurality of slips are retracted by a powered actuator. Further, in one or more embodiments, lifting the tubular segment with the elevator may include lifting the elevator by a pair of lifting ears disposed on the elevator, in which the pair of lifting ears are configured to bear a load of the tubular segment. In one or more embodiments, the plurality of slips may not be engaged with the tubular segment in the open position. In one or more embodiments, the plurality of slips may be engaged with the tubular segment in the closed position. In one or more embodiments, an engagement surface of the plurality of slips may be engaged with the tubular segment in the closed position.

Furthermore, in one or more embodiments, grasping the tubular segment in the vertical position with the elevator further may include guiding the tubular segment along a guide surface of the plurality of slips. Moreover, in one or more embodiments, grasping the tubular segment in the ver-

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tical position with the elevator further may include guiding the tubular segment along a guide portion of a base member of the elevator.

Referring now to FIGS. **12A** and **12B**, multiple views of an elevator **1200** according to embodiments disclosed herein are shown. As shown, the elevator **1200** may include an elevator body including a first elevator segment **1210A** and a second elevator segment **1210B**. In one or more embodiments, the first elevator segment **1210A** may be coupled to the second elevator segment **1210B** by way of a first pin **1240** and a second pin **1241**. In one or more embodiments, the first pin **1240** and the second pin **1241** may connect the first elevator segment **1210A** to the second elevator segment **1210B**. As such, in one or more embodiments, each of the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B** may each include bores formed therethrough, in which the bores formed through the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B** are configured to receive the first pin **1240** and the second pin **1241**.

In one or more embodiments, each of the first pin **1240** and the second pin **1241** may be removable, which may allow the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B** to be separated from each other. For example, in one or more embodiments, the first pin **1240** may be removed from engagement with the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B**, which may result in the first elevator segment **1210A** being able to pivot relative to the second elevator segment **1210B** about the second pin **1241**. As such, in one or more embodiments, the first pin **1240** may be removed from engagement with the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B**, which may allow the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B** to pivot about the second pin **1241** and receive a tubular segment (not shown) by separating the first elevator segment **1210A** from the second elevator segment **1210B**, and then closing the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B** around the tubular segment, and then re-inserting the first pin **1240**. In one or more embodiments, each of the first pin **1240** and the second pin **1241** may be attached to the first elevator segment **1210A** and/or the second elevator segment **1210B**, e.g., by way of a cord or tether.

In one or more embodiments, the elevator **1200** may include handles **1243** disposed on each of the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B**. In one or more embodiments, the handles **1243** may provide a gripping surface for an operator and may assist the operator in pivoting each of the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B** about a pivot point, e.g., about the first pin **1240** and/or about the second pin **1241**. As such, the handles **1243** may assist an operator in opening and closing the elevator **1200** around a tubular segment by removing the first pin **1240**, pulling/pushing the handle **1243** of one of the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B** to pivot one of the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B** about a pivot point, and then pushing/pulling the handle **1243** to close one of the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B** around a tubular segment.

Further, in one or more embodiments, the elevator **1200** may have a pair of lifting ears **1215** disposed thereon. For example, as shown, the lifting ears **1215** may be formed on a top surface of each of the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B**, and the lifting ears **1215** may be configured to bear the entire load of the elevator **1200** and the tubular segment (not shown) when lifting the tubular segment.

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Additionally, in one or more embodiments, the elevator body **1210** may have a guide portion **1216** formed on the top surface of each of the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B**. In one or more embodiments, the guide portion **1216** may be adjacent to a bore **1213** 5 formed between the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B** and may direct a tubular segment into the bore **1213** of the elevator **1200**. In one or more embodiments, the guide portion **1216** may include a tapered surface formed on each of the first elevator segment **1210A** and the second elevator segment **1210B** configured to 10 direct a tubular segment into the bore **1213** of the elevator **1200**.

Furthermore, in one or more embodiments, the elevator **1200** may include a plurality of slip assemblies **1220**. In one or more embodiments, the slip assemblies **1220** may include a slip **1224** disposed within an opening **1217**. In one or more 15 embodiments, the opening **1217** may include an inclined surface, and the weight of the slip **1224** may cause the slip **1224** to be biased toward a closed position, e.g., in a direction toward a longitudinal axis **1250** defined through the elevator **1200**. Further, in one or more embodiments, each of the openings **1217** may include a port **1242** formed therein, in which lubricant may be introduced into the openings **1217** 20 through the port **1242**. Introducing lubricant into the openings **1217** may preserve the ability of the slips **1224** to be biased toward the closed position by minimizing the coefficient of friction between the slips **1224** and the openings **1217**. In one or more embodiments, the ports **1242** may be sealed, e.g., by way of a cap or plug, such that materials are selectively introduced into the openings **1217**. 25

Optionally, in one or more embodiments, one or more of the slip assemblies **1220** may also include a biasing member **1228**. In one or more embodiments, the biasing member **1228** may be a spring that may engage a portion of the opening **1217** and a portion of the slip **1224** such that the slip **1224** is biased toward the closed position. The biasing member **1228** may reinforce the movement of the slip **1224** induced by the weight of the slip **1224** acting on the inclined surface of the openings **1217** and may further ensure that the slips **1224** may 30 automatically be biased toward the closed position.

In one or more embodiments, the slip **1224** may include an engagement surface **1225** configured to engage with a portion of a tubular segment (not shown). In one or more embodiments, the engagement surface **1225** may be cut on each of the slips **1224** such that the engagement surface **1225** is orthogonal to the longitudinal axis **1250** of the elevator **1200**. In one or more embodiments, the engagement surface **1225** may be configured to engage a portion of a tubular segment, e.g., a shoulder of a segment of shouldered pipe. 35

The foregoing has outlined features of several embodiments so that those skilled in the art may better understand the present disclosure. Those skilled in the art should appreciate that they may readily use the present disclosure as a basis for designing or modifying other processes and structures for carrying out the same purposes and/or achieving the same advantages of the embodiments introduced herein. Those skilled in the art should also realize that such equivalent constructions do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present disclosure, and that they may make various changes, substitutions and alterations herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present disclosure. 40

What is claimed is:

1. An elevator to manipulate a tubular segment, the elevator comprising: 45

an elevator body with a bore formed therethrough having an axis therein, the elevator body comprising:

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a plurality of openings extending from an outer surface of the elevator body to the bore of the elevator body; a plurality of slip assemblies disposed inside the plurality of openings and coupled to the elevator body, each of the plurality of slip assemblies comprising:

an actuator body coupled to the elevator body;

a slip, the slip comprising:

an engagement surface disposed orthogonal to the axis of the bore of the elevator body that engages the tubular segment; and

a guide surface adjacent to a bottom surface of the elevator body that is angled such that the tubular segment slides through the bore of the elevator body until the tubular segment is engaged by the engagement surface;

a powered actuator coupled to the slip and the actuator body, wherein the powered actuator is configured to retract the slip from the center of the bore of the elevator body; and

a base member coupled to a bottom surface of the elevator body, the base member having a guide portion that directs the tubular segment into the bore of the elevator body.

2. The elevator of claim 1, each of the plurality of slip assemblies further comprising a biasing member coupled to the slip, wherein the biasing member biases the slip toward a center of the bore of the elevator body.

3. The elevator of claim 2, wherein the biasing member is a spring coupled to the slip.

4. The elevator of claim 1, wherein the powered actuator is coupled to the slip by a pin, and wherein the powered actuator is coupled to the actuator body by a pin.

5. The elevator of claim 1, wherein the powered actuator is a hydraulic cylinder.

6. The elevator of claim 1, the elevator body further comprising a pair of lifting ears disposed on a top surface of the elevator body.

7. The elevator of claim 6, wherein the pair of lifting ears are configured to bear a load of the tubular segment.

8. The elevator of claim 1, the elevator body further comprising a guide portion formed on the top surface of the elevator body adjacent to the bore of the elevator body.

9. The elevator of claim 1, wherein the guide portion comprises a tapered surface configured to direct the tubular segment into the bore of the elevator body.

10. A method to manufacture an elevator that engages a tubular segment, the method comprising:

forming a bore in an elevator body of the elevator; and

forming a plurality of openings in the elevator housing that extend from an outer surface of the elevator body to the bore of the elevator body;

assembling a plurality of slip assemblies, wherein assembling each of the plurality of slip assemblies comprises:

forming an engagement surface that is disposed orthogonal to an axis of the bore of the elevator body configured to engage the tubular segment;

forming a guide surface adjacent to a bottom surface of the elevator body that is angled and configured to allow the tubular segment to slide through the bore of the elevator body until the tubular segment is engaged by the engagement surface;

coupling a powered actuator to an actuator body; and

coupling the powered actuator to the slip, wherein the powered actuator is configured to retract the slip from the biased position and toward the actuator body;

disposing the plurality of slip assemblies inside the plurality of openings of the elevator body; and

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coupling the plurality of slip assemblies to the elevator body, wherein the plurality of slip assemblies are configured to automatically engage the tubular segment.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein assembling the plurality of slip assemblies further comprises coupling a biasing member to a slip such that the slip is biased away from the actuator body toward a biased position.

12. The method of claim 10, further comprising coupling a base member to a bottom surface of the elevator body, wherein the base member is configured to direct the tubular segment into the bore of the elevator body.

13. A method to add a tubular segment to a drilling string of pipe, the method comprising:

rotating the tubular segment up from a non-vertical position to a substantially vertical position;

grasping the tubular segment in the vertical position with an elevator, wherein grasping the tubular segment comprises:

lowering the elevator over an upper end of the tubular segment;

separating a plurality of slips from a closed position to an open position by the upper end of the tubular segment, wherein the plurality of slips are biased toward the closed position;

guiding the tubular segment into a bore formed through a body of the elevator with a guide surface adjacent to a bottom surface of the elevator body, the guide surface being angled such that the tubular segment slides through the bore of the elevator body; and

automatically enclosing the plurality of slips about an outer diameter of the tubular segment, wherein a shoulder on the upper end of the tubular segment rests on upper surfaces of the plurality of slips;

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lifting the tubular segment with the elevator;

positioning the tubular segment over the drilling string of pipe;

threading the tubular segment onto the drilling string of pipe by rotating the tubular segment using the elevator; and

releasing the tubular segment from the elevator by retracting the slips from the outer diameter of the tubular segment.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein each of the plurality of slips are retracted by a powered actuator.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein lifting the tubular segment with the elevator comprises lifting the elevator by a pair of lifting ears disposed on the elevator, wherein the pair of lifting ears are configured to bear a load of the tubular segment.

16. The method of claim 13, wherein, in the open position, the plurality of slips are not engaged with the tubular segment.

17. The method of claim 13, wherein, in the closed position, the plurality of slips are engaged with the tubular segment.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein, in the closed position, an engagement surface of the plurality of slips are engaged with the tubular segment.

19. The method of claim 13, wherein grasping the tubular segment in the vertical position with the elevator further comprises guiding the tubular segment along a guide surface of the plurality of slips.

20. The method of claim 13, wherein grasping the tubular segment in the vertical position with the elevator further comprises guiding the tubular segment along a guide portion of a base member of the elevator.

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